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Association honors revitalization efforts

By Hillary Wundrow
Daily News staff writer

The Downtown Beloit Association honored those who helped the vision for downtown Beloit become a reality Thursday evening.

With the gypsy swing music of Harmonious Wail kicking off the evening, the DBA held its 18th Annual Meeting at the Grande Banquet Hall. The theme of the evening was "Connecting Vision to Reality, One Piece at a Time."

"It's really about every point of action, every project, every business and every person contributing to the whole of a better downtown revitalization effort," said DBA Executive Director Kathleen Braatz.

Braatz and Brad Austin, president of Corporate Contractors Inc. and 2007 Chairman of the DBA Board of Directors, emceed the event.

Austin said the DBA consists of 175 businesses, more than 2,000 employees, which host 40 days of events in downtown Beloit.

"As a small staff of two to three people with a limited budget, we count on the kindness and generosity of those who believe that preserving, animating and invigorating downtown Beloit really matters," Braatz said.

The first award, Best Facade Restoration in 2006, was awarded to United Supply LLC for restoring Chester Square, an art deco building west of the river.

"The outcome is historically sensitive and a sign of renewed activity, investment and value on the West side of downtown," Braatz said.

The Best New Building and Business Expansion Project in 2006 went to Regal-Beloit Corporate Office and Packard Learning Center. Accepting the award was Regal-Beloit's learning center coordinator Jim Lohmeyer.

In 2006, Regal-Beloit invested \$5 million in a state-of-the-art corporate office and learning center which is slated



Staff photo by Clint Wolf

Award winners at the Downtown Beloit Association Annual Meeting were, from left, Mike Slavish of Hendricks Development Group, Dave Luebke of Hendricks Development Group, Becky Rogers for the Beloit International Film Festival, Anjanette Aumann and Christine Drake of Pizzazz for new business of the year, Rod Beaudoin for Beloit International Film Festival, and Jim Lohmeyer of Regal-Beloit stand together. The DBA held its 18th Annual Meeting at the Grande Banquet Hall on Thursday evening.

to bring as many as 1,500 employees from around the world through Beloit every year.

"The project will also create 15 new jobs. Beyond the bricks and mortar investment and jobs created, this project represents the commitment of this world class \$1.6 billion company to continue to call downtown Beloit its home," Austin said.

The Best Mixed-Use Development Project 2006 went to Hendricks Development Group for Heritage View. Mike Slavish, real estate director, accepted the award.

Heritage View was completed in 2006. Its first floor has 11,500 square feet of retail and office space and 75 percent of this space has been secured with commitments from Life Circle, Quizno's and Pleasant Street Coffeehouse. The second and third floors are divided for 14 condominiums ranging from \$189,900 to \$279,000.

The Best New Business in 2006 Award went to Pizzazz, a downtown boutique which has partnered with neighboring businesses in collective marketing and exclusive evening shopping events. Owners Anjanette Aumann and Christine Drake accepted the awards.

The Volunteer of the Year Award went to Mel Donny for watering 80 hanging baskets and urns after the DBA's budget for streetscape maintenance was cut in 2005.

The Honorary Board Member Award went to Don Tinder for being a good steward of the organization.

The Award of Excellence went to The Beloit International Film Festival (BIFF). In its second year, 5,500 people attended the four-day event.

Beloit Inn manager Becky Rogers and Rod Beaudoin accepted the award. Between volunteers and local businesses, Rogers said it took about 1,000 people to put on the event.

The Chairman's Award went to John Stanton, owner of Stanton Shoes. Austin said the business has been a retail cornerstone since its opening in 1907.